IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a listing of the claims in the application with claims 11, 37 and 41 shown as amended.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea, an imidazole ring-containing compound or an indole ring-containing compound.

Claims 5-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution containing (a) an anionic surfactant and (b) an agent selected from the group consisting of an amphoteric surfactant, a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; and

~~(2) obtaining a treated sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and~~

~~(3)~~ (2) adding the treated sample containing treatment solution to reaction buffer and detecting the virus antigen by immunoassay using the probe monoclonal antibody.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A virus assay method, characterized by using a sample treating method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 and reacting it with a probe which specifically recognizes a virus antigen, for detection or quantization of the presence of the virus antigen.

Claims 13-33 (Cancelled)

Claim 34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 35 and 36 (Cancelled)

Claim 37. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or a hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, and (c) an agent selected from the group consisting of a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant, such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b) and the agent (c);

~~(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated;~~ and

~~(3)~~ (2) ~~subjecting~~ adding the treated sample containing treatment solution ~~diluted with~~ to reaction buffer ~~to an~~ and detecting the virus antigen by immunoassay using the probe monoclonal antibody ~~for detecting the viral antigens~~.

Claim 38. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 39 and 40 (Cancelled)

41. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, (c) a nonionic surfactant and (d) a protein denaturant; such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b), the nonionic surfactant (c) and the protein denaturant (d);

~~(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated;~~ and

~~(3)~~ (2) ~~subjecting~~ adding the treated sample containing treatment solution ~~diluted with~~ to reaction buffer ~~to an~~ and detecting the virus antigen by immunoassay using a the probe monoclonal antibody ~~for detecting the viral antigen~~.